

LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL (TX)
22 June 1983

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The CIA Today...



THE SPY BUSINESS has been around as long as there have been people and governments who do not trust one another.

Which has been since the beginning of time.

That "keeping tabs" on one's enemies, if not friends, has been an accepted way of conducting foreign as well as domestic affairs few will dispute. But, how it is done is another matter.

To Col. Vincent M. Lockhart, Ret., and a veteran of more than 50 years service in the National Guard and Army Reserve, along with active duty in three wars, the business of having one of the best intelligence systems in the world is the business of survival.

In fact, the colonel, who spent 19 years with the Central Intelligence Agency, argues such a system is one of the nation's highest priorities.

THAT WAS part of a message the current El Paso soldier-writer left in Lubbock this week in a talk to South Plains Shriners and to us.

Col. Lockhart, a former Texas newsman, is aware that the CIA, along with the FBI and anything else that smacks of "spying" are all high on the target list of the liberal media as well as some politicians and do-gooders.

Yet, he argues that of six major things necessary for this nation's survival, to have "the finest intelligence system in the world" ranks at the top. The CIA is working for America, not against it, he argues in answer to those who accuse the agency of everything from spreading dissension to death.

"As a matter of fact, I will simply tell you that the CIA has never assassinated anyone, and most of the charges against the CIA have not had nor now have any basis in fact," the colonel says when asked about such charges. The CIA has made some mistakes, some biggies, he readily admits, but is not guilty of most of the things of which it is accused, he says.

THOSE AREN'T the only misconceptions about the CIA, Lockhart says.

In the first place, the CIA hasn't been around since the days of Mata Hari. "Few people realize it," Lockhart says, "but the National Defense Act of 1947, which created the joint Chiefs of Staff concept, also created the CIA."

"Everyone says that it was started to prevent another Pearl Harbor, but Pearl Harbor had nothing to do with it," Lockhart says.

The nation was well into World War II when FDR felt he needed some sort of intelligence setup on a worldwide basis which could central-

ize the vast amount of data pouring into Washington. He called on Wild Bill Donovan to set up the Office of Strategic Services, OSS, which played a key role in some phases of WWII.

After the war, the Central Intelligence Group was formed by Executive Order, more as a caretaker for records of the OSS than anything else. But, then President Truman accepted advice to expand the agency's role and pushed the CIA as part of the defense legislation, Lockhart says. HST persuaded Allen Dulles, who had worked with the OSS, to get the whole thing underway. It was in the early stages of the CIA in the 1950's that Col. Lockhart, after a stint as publisher of The Canadian Record, and study at the Staff and Command School, became involved with the agency in a top-level position.

LOCKHART SAYS the CIA has been blamed for, and given credit for many things it should not have been.

Among its early "notable successes," he cites as 1953 when the CIA "stiffened the backbone of the Iranian Army and helped the Shah of Iran regain his throne against Mossadegh." The other had to do with aiding in the defeat of the Communist regime which sought to take over Guatemala in 1954.

But, despite the fact that the CIA was doing a good, solid job at home and abroad in taking information and making it into solid intelligence, the organization soon got in over its head and capabilities, Lockhart admits.

"The Bay of Pigs was the first great disaster for the agency," Lockhart says. It failed, he says, because 1. Such an operation was beyond the capability of the CIA, 2. Political reasons caused a change in plans, and 3. JFK withdrew critical U.S. air support at the last minute.

The Vietnam War "was another dagger in the side of CIA," Lockhart says. Again the agency was called on to do things past its capability, "and when the unpopular war ended, the anti-war groups turned their vindictive criticism against both the CIA and the FBI."

WATERGATE, WITH the involvement of a former CIA agent, and the baying of the liberal media only added to the CIA's problems.

In the wake of what Lockhart calls a "witch hunt" by Congress, "grossly exaggerated charges were made in the media." Those charges included the claims "that the CIA was guilty of massive domestic spying; had assassinated foreign leaders, and possibly even President Kennedy." The CIA has even been "linked" to the death of Marilyn Monroe.

But, Lockhart says that "the most damaging assaults on the CIA have been by a handful of former employees, mostly in the name of the peoples' right to know." And while he thinks the government must answer to the people, Lockhart argues "no intelligence system can operate in full view of the world. The KGB doesn't."

Lockhart says that Adm. Stansfield Turner did more to "emasculate" the CIA as its director under President Carter than anyone before or since. But, under William Casey, he says things are looking up.

"I believe the CIA will return as a top-flight organization," he says, "But I am just as sure it will never return to the glorious days of the late fifties and early sixties. Perhaps it is just as well..."